A LETTER FROM A GENTLEMAN in the CITY TO A GENTLEMAN in the COUNTRY, ABOUT THE Odiousness of Persecution.

WHEREIN

The Rise and End of the Penal Laws for Religion in this Kingdom, are consider'd.

Occasioned by the late Rigorous Proceedings against Sober Dissenters, by certain Angry Justices IN THE COUNTRY.

It is the Part of the Christian *Religion to Suffer, and not to make People Suffer for Religion,* Tertul. Apol.

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THE LETTER.

SIR,

THE News of a Perſecution meerly for a matter of Religion, at this time a day, when the whole Nation appears profeſſedly to diſlike it; and the giving countenance to Informers (who are the Peſt of every Nation, and the common Enemies of Property) to the Prejudice of Peaceable and Trading People, makes your Friends, who have had notice of your late Troubles, ſuſpect that there is ſomething in your caſe more than ordinary.

Had this fallen out in ſome remote Country, where no Informer had ever yet appeared, we might have conceived, that through Ignorance that ſort of Devil might have been miſtaken for an Angel of Light; and that upon his bare Averrment, ſome well-meaning Perſons, even againſt their own Experience, might have been induced to miſtake their Peaceable Neighbours for Dangerous Incendiaries, and unworthy to enjoy their own proper Goods. But to ſee that ſort of Creature concerned

a Country ſo near *London* and *Weſtminſter*, as not to be capable of knowing what Informers are, how deteſtable their Trade, how inconſiderable their Power, how generally indigent and diſſolute, how mean their Skill, how little they know more than to ſubborn Witneſſes to commit Perjuries, which are diſcovered to their Confuſion, is that which raiſed Wonder in ſome of your Friends, to ſo great an height, that they generally requeſt from your own hand the true ſtate of your Caſe in all its Circumſtances, to the end they may know, whether there be any thing which can differ it from the common Caſes of Perſecution meerly for Religion; from which the generality of the Country-Gentlemen of *England* (and particularly thoſe of the Country where you live) do commonly profeſs to have as great an abhorrency, as they have from Depopulating of Countries, which is the Effect that ſuch Perſecutions muſt of neceſſity produce. In the mean time, do not I pray take me to be one, who think it ſtrange to hear of Troubles; what hath been formerly, may happen again without Aſtoniſhment; and you are too well known to be thought to be ſurprized or afraid.

Well did that Perſon conſider the Creature *Man*, who diſtinguiſhed him into two parts, viz. *the Man*, and *the Beaſt*: But it were happy for Mankind, if the *Beaſt* were leſs imperious and cruel: In truth, it is rare to find where *the Man* is allowed to have any power in Acting; every thing ſeems too much to be governed by *the Beaſt*, and by the Tyranny of its inordinate Paſſions and Senſes.

And yet where ſhall one find a ſingle Perſon in the World, who calls himſelf a *Chriſtian*, or that Party of Men who deſire to be eſteemed *Chriſtians*, but he and they will readily grant that Principle, Mat. 7.12. *All things whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do even ſo to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets?* and that other Principle, Rom. 3. 8. *Let us not do Evil that Good may come*, to be Goſpel-Principles, and obliging to all Mankind?

There is not a Politician or States-man, nor a Government any where, that owns *Chriſtianity* to be the true Religion, but confeſſeth

feſſeth, That in the Council of the *Jews*, which was aſſembled in order to the Perſecuting of the Apoſtles for matters of meer Religion, *Gamaliel* adviſed prudently, and according to the Principles of true Religion, *Acts* 5. *Let them alone, for if this Counſel or this work be of Men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, we cannot overthrow it, leaſt happily we be found even to Fight againſt God.* They will all confeſs readily, when preſſed with theſe charitable and peaceable Principles; that the Spirit of Perſecuting for meer Religion, is a Spirit of Injuſtice, as not doing to others as our ſelves would be done unto; and a Spirit of Diffidence and Incredulity, refuſing to truſt God, and his Providence, with the Defence and Juſtification of what is Profeſſed to be of God: And yet it is hard to find that ſingle Perſon, and much more to name, that Community or Government amongſt *Chriſtians*, now in being, whoſe practice, when they have opportunity and power, are not contrary to their Principles. And not only ſo, but they will take upon them to juſtifie ſuch practices to be conſiſtent with, nay, even duties, unto which they are obliged by that pure Religion, which they take upon them to profeſs to the whole World.

But to the end I may not be eſteemed preſumptuous, or uncharitable in what I here aſſert, and in regard it is impoſſible to produce evident proofs for what I ſay, as touching ſingle Perſons; let us a little examine the matter, as to Parties and Governments, taking this for granted, that every particular Party calls it ſelf a true Church, or the true Church of *Chriſt*. If what is here urged of differing Churches ſhall be proved true, the preſumption will ſtand very ſtrong as to ſingle Perſons; there being no ſingle Perſon, who would be eſteemed a *Chriſtian*, but he is in communion or fellowſhip with ſome Church, which he owns to be the true Church of *Chriſt*, and by whoſe Judgment he is willing to be concluded, as being a profeſſed Member of it; and as taking it for his Principle, that every Member of the true Church of *Chriſt* ought to be of her Judgment, becauſe the Scripture ſays, *She is the Pillar and Ground of Truth*: And though ſome boggle at this, yet nothing is truer than that every *Chriſtian* Society daily practiſeth it.

Now, the better to prepare the way for this intended Tryal, we will crave the Liberty firſt, to conſider *Chriſtianity* in the World

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in general, in its firſt Ages, when it was under Perſecution for meer matter of Religion, and before it gained any civil Power and Dominion; From them we ſhall know what the true *Chriſtianity* did teach: We will then conſider *Chriſtianity* in *England*, when divided only into two diſtinct Parties, *viz.* The *Proteſtants*, and the *Papiſts*: And in the laſt place, We will conſider *Chriſtianity* in *England*, when the *Proteſtants* were ſub-divided into ſeveral Parties, *viz.* The *Epiſcopal*, or Church of *England Proteſtants*, the *Presbyterians*, the *Independants*, the *Anabaptiſts*, and the *Quakers*: and when the *Papiſts* were become ſo ſmall, that they were upon the matter inconſiderable; and I ſuppoſe, from theſe differing times, we may hope for a reaſonable Information.

Firſt then, Suppoſe the queſtion put to the *Chriſtians* of the firſt and Primitive Times, in thoſe firſt and greateſt Perſecutions, under which Chriſtianity then ſuffered. *Is it lawful to Perſecute, and to make and Execute Laws for the Inflicting of Pains and Penalties upon quiet and peaceable People, for Matters meerly of Religion*; and in particular, *For meeting together meerly for matter of Religion?* Doubtleſs, their Anſwer would have been given with one general Voice: *That it was not Lawful*; and that it was againſt the Rule of *Chriſt*, and the Law of Nature, *Quod Tibi non vis fieri, Alteri non feceris, Do not unto another, what thou wouldſt not have done unto thy ſelf.* And that true it is, the *Jews*, who Perſecuted the Lord of Life, and put him to Death for matter of meer Religion, did alledge for their Juſtification, *That they had a Law*, and *that by their Law he ought to Dye*: But that that Law, and all Laws of that Nature, were againſt the Law of God: And that the *Chriſtians had no ſuch cuſtom, nor the Churches of Chriſt*, is I think, a moſt undeniable thing.

Theſe Ages (by the Agreement of all) were eſteemed the pureſt Ages of Chriſtianity; Religion being then moſt Pure, when the Profeſſors of it were moſt Poor. And if any one ſhall conceive, that the *Chriſtians* of thoſe Ages would have given any other Anſwer, contrary to what I have here framed for them, and ſhall give a convincing Reaſon for ſuch his Apprehenſion, I ſhall confeſs my miſtake. In the mean time I muſt ſay, That I cannot ſee what other anſwer they could have given bu-

but what muſt have juſtified the Perſecutions againſt themſelves to have been innocent, on the part of the Perſecutors, who believed thoſe firſt *Chriſtians* to Err in Religion, and to be Diſturbers of the Peace, and Government of their Countries, and their Meetings to be unlawful Aſſemblies: And much more Innocent on the part of the inferiour Magiſtrates, who took care to put thoſe Laws in Execution; they being as much obliged in all civil Reſpects, to put in Execution the Laws of their Superiours, as our Inferiour Magiſtrates are obliged to the Execution of our Laws; and they gave the ſame Reaſons. And the ſame is to be ſaid in the Caſe of the Perſecution of our Lord Chriſt, as ſeems very clear from that Prayer, which he offered for his Perſecutors: *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do*; here then is a Principle of Chriſtianity undivided.

In the next place, We are to conſider Chriſtianity in *England*, when divided only into two diſtinct Parties, *viz. Proteſtants* and *Papiſts*, and when the *Proteſtants* had made a Sub diviſion amongſt themſelves here. This I take to be in the times of K. *Hen.* 8. K. *Edw.* 6. Q. *Mary*, and part of the Reign of Q. *Elizabeth*; for though there were diverſities of Opinions amongſt *Proteſtants*, as well here as in other Countries, even in the firſt beginnings; yet they were not divided into Parties, being every-where upon the Defenſive. In the time of K. *Hen.* 8. which I intend to inſtance in, both Parties were perſecuted.

The Caſe ſtands thus: That King at his coming to the Crown, found the whole Nation in a quiet poſſeſſion of Popery, and holding it as an Article of their Faith, and the Principle whereon they believed the Unity of their Faith depended, that, *The Pope was the Supream Paſtor, and viſible Head of Government next under Chriſt, of the Catholick Church of Chriſt, of which the then National-Church of* England *was a Member:* The King had defended this Article by Writing ſo vigorouſly againſt *M. Lutger*, that the Pope had for that very work conferred upon him the Title of *Defender of the Faith*, to be enjoyed and uſed by him, and his Succeſſors for ever. After this, by *Act of Parliament*, this Supream Paſtor, this Viſible Head was thrown off, and this King put in his place, ſo far as concerned the Church of *England*, by the

the Title of *Supream Head of the Church of England*, annexed to the Crown; and this by a Law, 26 *Hen.* 8. C. 1. And then by another Law, 26 *Hen.* 8. C. 13. it was Enacted, *That if any by Word or Writing, should attempt to Deprive the King of the Title of His Royal Estate, he should be adjudged a Traytor:* This change of the Headship of the Church, was, and is truly (at least in *England*) a *Protestant* Doctrine; and undoubtedly there is no *Protestant* whatsoever, but approves the casting off the *Popes* Headship, as conformable with the Doctrine of *Protestants*. And upon the latter of these two Laws, divers suffered Death for their denying the Kings Supremacy. This was the first step made in *England*, from *Popery* towards *Protestancy*.

And the Vigorous Execution of this latter Law, encouraged several *Protestants* from Forreign parts to come into *England*, not doubting but to have a Liberty to Exercise their Religion here; and it gave confidence to many of the Subjects of *England* to receive, and to others, to entertain good thoughts of *Protestancy*; being perswaded, that after the shedding of so much Blood, as had been shed here upon that Occasion, *England* would never any more admit of the Article of the Popes Supremacy; and consequently, would every day make greater steps from that Church, of which the Pope was owned to be the Supream Pastor.

And certain it is, that *Protestancy* upon this Occasion also made its entrance into *England*, and gained Ground here, and such (if not by open application to the King for that purpose, yet) at least in their Hearts desired a Toleration, and to be admitted to Preach, and Exercise their Religion here, without being Persecuted for their so doing; so that their Principle was at that time (at least) against Persecution for meer Religion. But *Protestancy* being now taken notice of to grow, another Law was made, 31 *Hen.* 8. for setling unity of Opinion in the six Articles therein named, by which the denyal of Transubstantiation, and several other Doctrines therein named, are Enacted to be punished with Death.

And now Persecution in *England*, for matters of meer Religion, grew sharp and high; so that it is observed by our Historians, that upon one and the same day, some who were Professed *Papists*, were put to Death for denying the Kings Supremacy which

which was a *Proteſtant* Article: And ſome who were profeſſed *Proteſtants*, were put to death for denying Tranſubſtantiation, which was an Article of the *Papiſts*: So that at this time, the Government could neither be ſaid to be *Popiſh*, nor *Proteſtant*, but both Parties were Perſecuted moſt ſeverely for matters of meer Religion: And he who ſhould then have ſaid to either Party, in juſtification of the Proceedings of the Magiſtrate in the Execution of either of thoſe Laws, That that Party did not then ſuffer for any matter of meer Religion, but for breaking of the Peace, in breaking of the King's Laws, would certainly have been taken not to have underſtood thoſe Laws, or the cauſe of their then Suffering.

And now, ſuppoſe each of theſe Parties ſeparately interrogated, when thus under Perſecution (for *Afflictio dat intellectum*,) Is it lawful to Perſecute, and to make and Execute Laws, for the Inflicting of Pains and Penalties upon quiet and peaceable People, for matters of *meer Religion?* (for it ſeemed a time to teach both Parties an Eternal temperance and moderation) moſt certainly, each Party in their then preſent Circumſtances, would have anſwered in the Negative, That it was not lawful: They would not have fallen into the debate to conſider what Religion their Perſecutors were of, whether of the *Popiſh* or *Proteſtant*, to the end, to have fixt the Cruelty and Injuſtice of Perſecuting for a matter of meer Religion, upon that Party, as a Principle of their Religion, which their Fancies ſhould have perſwaded them to have been the Religion of their Perſecutors.

The *Papiſts* would not have then ſtood formalizing that, becauſe the firſt Perſecution was occaſioned upon the denyal of the King's Headſhip over the Church of *England*, which was a *Proteſtant* Doctrine, in oppoſition to the Pope's Headſhip, which was the *Popiſh* Doctrine; therefore the *Proteſtants* were the Aggreſſors in the Perſecution; and therefore the Principle of Perſecution was a *Proteſtant* Principle; and the Perſecution of the *Proteſtants* afterwards, was no other than a juſt Judgment of God drawn upon the *Proteſtants* by themſelves, as a Conſequence of that Principle of Perſecution, which gave them the firſt occaſion of introducing their Religion nationally into *England*. Nor would the *Proteſtants*,

by way of Recrimination, have charged the *Papists* then, that because that King and the then Government were of the *Popish* Religion in every point, save only in the Article touching the Supremacy; therefore the Principle of Persecution must necessarily be a *Popish* Principle: No, they would most certainly, each Party, have disclaimed the Principle, as unwarranted by the Principles of true *Christianity*, which each of them claimed to be theirs, and each of them would have agreed, that it was their common Principle, To do unto others as they desired others should do unto them. Here we see the Principle of *Christianity* in *England*, when divided.

The Persecutions before mentioned, being quieted by the Death of K. *Henry* the Eighth, and the Crown descending unto K. *Edward* the Sixth, an Infant of such tender Years, as made him uncapable of Exercising the Government in his own Person, not being come to the use of right Reason; the Duke of *Somerset* took upon him the Administration of all things, under the Title of *Protector*, and with him the *Protestant* Party had their sole Interest.

Several Penal Laws were made in this King's Reign, for the Inflicting Pains and Penalties for matters of meer Religion, which gave occasion to the *Papists* to charge upon *Protestants* the Principle of Persecution for matters of meer Religion, as their Principle. It is true, the *Papists* were at that time Sufferers, and were actually Persecuted by the then Government for matters of meer Religion: But true Charity might easily have found other Reasons, unto which those Persecutions might warrantably have been Assigned; and there was certainly no necessity of Assigning them to any Principle of the *Protestants*.

The first Law which was made, relating to these matters, was 1. *Edw.* 6. C. 1. touching the Lord's Supper, Entituled, *The Penalties for speaking against the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, or against the receiving thereof in both kinds*. This seems to have no other tendency than barely to keep both Parties from falling together by the Ears, and the *Protestants* were more likely to fall under the Punishment of this Law, than the *Papists*: None could say, That it was the effect of Intemperate Spirits; for though it directed Communion in both kinds, to such as desired to Communicate; yet it compelled not any person to communicate. And it had a Clause

Clauſe of great Temperance in the very cloſe of it, in theſe words; *Not condemning hereby the uſage of any Church out of the King's Majeſties Dominions.*

The next Law of this Nature, was made in the ſame Parliament, *viz.* 1 *Edw.* 6. C. 12. it is Entituled thus, *viz.* *Statutes concerning Treaſons*, &c. *repealed*: and this cannot be denyed to be ſharp againſt the *Papiſts*. It makes it highly Penal to affirm, *That the King is not, or ought not to be Supream Head on Earth of the Church of* England *and* Ireland, *or any of them immediately under God, or that the Biſhop of* Rome, *or any other Perſon or Perſons, other than the King of* England *for the time being, is, or ought to be, by the Laws of God, Supream Head of the ſame Churches, or any of them*: But there is no neceſſity or reaſon of aſcribing this neither to any *Proteſtant* Principle, though it is ſuppoſed to be made in affirmance of a *Proteſtant* Principle.

Another penal Law was made 1. and 3. *Edw.* 6. Entituled, *The Penalty for not uſing Uniformity of Service and Adminiſtration of Sacraments.* And in 3. and 4. *Edw.* 6. C. 10. was made an Act, *For the aboliſhing and putting away of divers Books and Images.* Both which were ſevere againſt the *Papiſts* in matters of meer Religion; yet do I not find any neceſſity, why the Perſecutions, which theſe Statutes occaſioned, ſhould be imputed to any *Proteſtant* Principle.

During the whole Reign of this Infant King, it is clear, that the *Papiſts* in ſome degree ſuffered Perſecution from the Hands of the *Proteſtants*, for matters of meer Religion: And without doubt, had it been then demanded of the *Papiſts*, *Whether ſuch Perſecutions and ſuch Laws Enacting ſuch Perſecutions, were lawful, and agreeable with the Principles of true* Chriſtianity, *which they pretended to maintain*? their Anſwer would have been in the *Negative*: And they would then with one accord have readily agreed, *That Perſecution for matters of meer Religion, was no more conſiſtent with the Rule of Chriſt, requiring us, To do unto others, as we would that others ſhould do unto us, than Murder and Robbery.*

But the Perſecutions Inflicted upon the *Papiſts*, by the Law made in the time of King *Edward* the Sixth, did not laſt long; they ended with his Life; and by the deſcending of the Crown to Queen *Mary*, the *Papiſts* were reſcued from all their Sufferings. All the Laws made againſt them in the Times of *Hen.* 8. and *Edw.* 6.

were Repealed. But the caſe was altered with the poor *Proteſtants*, whoſe Sufferings were ſo great, and are ſo ſharply and juſtly reflected on, even to this day, that I, who love not to aggravate any thing, eſpecially that carries its own aggravation with it, will ſay no more of them, but beg of our good *God*, to fill us with mercy in place of revenge, and to forgive them as we would be forgiven. Sure I am, had any *Proteſtant* been asked his Judgment in that Age, touching the Principle of Perſecuting for matters of meer Religion, he would have diſclaimed it, as abſolutely contrary to the Principles of his Religion, which is the point that I am labouring to Evince. And after all this, ſhall any one take it ill, if upon a Principle of Charity I ſhall profeſs, that I could never as yet ſee any thing offered, which in my poor apprehenſion did neceſſarily Evince; *That Perſecution for meer Religion, was even an avowed Principle of either ſide.*

The Bloody Fury of Perſecution, under which the *Proteſtants* ſuffered ſo miſerably in Q. *Maries* time, did end with her Reign, which was but ſhort. And after that, the *Proteſtants* never ſuffered more from the *Papiſts*. But upon the death of Q. *Mary*, the Crown coming to Q. *Elizabeth*; and ſhe thereupon declaring her ſelf a firm, a zealous, and to all intents, religiouſly a *Proteſtant*, the Edge was turned againſt the *Papiſts*, before any differences were diſcerned to be among the *Proteſtants*. Several of the Popiſh Clergy ſuffered Perſecution, ſome even unto Death in ſeveral parts of the Kingdom: And new Laws were from time to time framed and multiplyed for thoſe purpoſes. And if now we ask the Opinion of the *Papiſts*, as to Penal Laws, either Sanguinary or others, and Perſecutions, for meer matter of Religion; they will tell you, (and they continue in that proteſtation even unto this day) *That all ſuch Laws and Perſecutions are unlawful, and againſt the Principles of the Goſpel.* And though the *Proteſtants* under ſeveral changes, have been in the poſſeſſion of thoſe Laws, and have at times more or leſs Executed them; yet (ſo far as I can find) they do not own Perſecution for matters meerly of Religion to be their Principle, or ſo much as lawful.

After the *Papiſts* had ſome time continued the alone-Perſecuted Party for Matters of Religion, ſeveral Differences, in Matters meerly of Religion, happened to divide the *Proteſtants* into

into distinct and separate Parties, during some part of the Reign of *Queen Elizabeth*; and also during the several and successive Reigns of King *James*, and King *Charles* the First: And about the beginning of the Reign of King *James*, some few desperate Male-contents, professedly of the Popish Religion, being found Guilty of a wicked Plot, whereby they had designed the Destruction both of that King, and of his Parliament, by Gun-Powder (for which they were deservedly Executed) several new and more severe Laws were then, and at several times after, made against the *Papists* in general, by which several Punishments were Inflicted on them for Matters of meer Religion; and several Penal Laws were also made, by which the then Governing *Protestant* Party, (then, and still distinguished by the Name of the *Church of England*, or the *Episcopal Party*) persecuted Them.

The Dissenting *Protestants* of all sorts were Prosecuted under the general Name of *Non-conformists*, who cryed aloud for *Liberty of Conscience*, and declared it absolutely Unlawful to Punish any, for Matters of meer Religion: The refusal of which, bred bad Blood in the Kingdom, and we all know what followed.

During the continuance of the War, and after King *Charles* the First was not able to make Head against the *Non-conformists*, the *Non-conformists* Retaliated the Church of *England*, and not a little cruſht the *Popish* Party, both having engaged on t'other side, and being of other Religions, esteemed themselves Persecuted for matter of Religion.

That War being ended with the Death of King *Charles* the First, and the expelling of our late King out of his Dominions, and the Ruine of *Episcopacy*, and the Suppression of the *Papists*, and the total Change of the Government; the *Non-conformists* under the several Forms, took upon them and kept the Government, until the late King was by the Divine Hand of Providence restored to his Crown: During all which time, the *Episcopal* Party and the *Papists* Suffered, more or less, for matters (at least in their Apprehension) meerly of Religion. But these two Parties were not alone in their Sufferings; for during those Bloody contests, there appeared another Party, which from its very first rise in this Kingdom, hath been severely Persecuted,

ſecuted, and that only for Matters of Religion. This Party was the People called *Quakers*. They did at their firſt ſhewing themſelves in the World, go under the name of the *Children of Light*, becauſe they aſſert, as their main and firſt Principle, *That* Chriſt *is the True Light that Enlightens every Man and Woman with a meaſure of ſaving Light; which all ought to obey on pain of Damnation*; but by one *Bennit*, an Officer, in 1650. were nick-named *Quakers*. They Profeſſed themſelves to adhere to the plain Principles of the firſt *Chriſtians*, and particularly to hold it as their Principle, *That all Perſecution whatſoever, againſt any Party, People or Perſon whatſoever, for matters meerly of Religion, is abſolutely Unlawful, Unrighteous, and againſt the Spirit and Will of God, and Doctrine of true Chriſtianity.* And to give them their due, they have been true Contenders for their Principle, both by their frequent Apologies and Remonſtrances on the one hand, and Invincible Patience in Suffering on the other hand.

Upon the Reſtauration of the King, the *Epiſcopal* Party was alſo Reſtored. The *Presbyterians*, *Independants* and *Anabaptiſts*, expected a general Toleration in matters of Religion, according to ſome of the King's Gracious Letters, as a Reward for their helping or not oppoſing His Reſtauration. The *Papiſts* alſo expected the ſame thing, as a reward for their Loyalty in adhering to the Crown. The *Quakers*, now a great People, grew confident of the like Freedom, becauſe of their Inoffenſiveneſs to Government. But inſtead of this expected Liberty; all the former Penal Laws made in the time of Q. *Elizabeth*, K. *James*, and K. *Charles* the Firſt, were Revived, and ordered to be put in Execution, as well againſt all *Non-conformiſts*, who were *Proteſtants*, as againſt the *Papiſts*. And new and more ſevere Laws were made againſt them all: And by theſe reſpective Practices we ſee, what all theſe Parties have done when they had Power.

I think ſuch as underſtand the Tranſactions of our Country, will clear me from having made any miſtake as to matters of Fact, in any thing that I have here ſaid, touching paſt Perſecutions; though I believe there will not want ſome, who will either think me miſ-

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taken in the point of Charity, when I profeſs to believe that I do not think there is any one Party now in *England*, who holds it as a Principle of their Religion, *That it is Lawful to Perſecute*, or to make or Execute Laws for the Inflicting of Pains or Penalties for any matters of meer Religion: Or elſe they will ſuſpect, I do not in Truth believe what I here profeſs to believe in this point; ſince even what I have ſaid as to matters of Fact before urged by my ſelf; it plainly appears, that there is not one Party now in *England* (the People called *Quakers* only excepted) who profeſs themſelves *Chriſtians*, but have been notoriouſly Guilty (more or leſs) of the very Fact, or (at leaſt) of a publick allowing, if not abetting of it: And every Party will be apt to cenſure me of Singularity (at leaſt,) ſince each Party thinks that they have Arguments drawn from Facts, ſufficient to fix this ugly Doctrine, as a Principle, upon that Religion which they hate moſt. O that the *Man* could prevail againſt the *Beaſt*! and that we would permit our Paſſions to give way to our Reaſon, to conſider things nakedly, and as they truly are, *Si ſatis eſt accuſâſſe, Quis erit Innocens?* If to accuſe be a ſufficient Conviction, what Party ſhall be able to clear it ſelf? And who knows not, that 'tis a *Chriſtians* part to Suffer, but never to Perſecute?

I very well know, That the *Proteſtants* in general, who look upon the *Papiſts* as their common Enemies, do in their Pulpits, in their Writings, and in all their Addreſſes to the People, charge them with thoſe Rivers of Blood which ſtreamed in the times of Q. *Mary*, and with the Bloody Intentions which thoſe ill Men had in their Hearts, who were engaged in the wicked Powder-Plot: That the firſt was done by Authority, and chiefly by the *Popiſh* Biſhops: That the other, though the Fact but of private Perſons, was never condemned by Authority; and Silence is an implyed conſent and approbation. Do we well conſider, what the *Papiſts* offer by way of Extenuation in anſwer to theſe Charges? they juſtifie none of theſe Facts: But as to the firſt, they recommend to us to be conſidered, the circumſtances that Q. *Mary* was in, when ſhe came to the Crown. All the chief Heads of the *Proteſtant* Party, had ſet up and Proclaimed the Lady *Jane* duly

duly Queen, in oppoſition to Q. *Mary*, their Lawful Soveraign. They had raiſed an Army againſt her: She was compelled to gain her Right by Force: She was a Conqueror: And if we will believe them, ſhe had not given any Articles, which might have obliged her to Pardon any who were guilty of this Uſurpation, and Treaſon: She was told, It was a Confedracy of the whole Party of the *Proteſtants*, which gave her a ground to ſuſpect, that the *Proteſtants* held it for a principle, That it was lawful for them to take up Arms againſt, and Depoſe their Lawful Soveraign, if of a Religion contrary to him.

She might, by the Laws then in being, (the ſame which we have to this day in force amongſt us) have taken away the Lives of all who were any ways Guilty of endeavouring to Depoſe her: She did not make any one new Perſecuting Law (which is conſiderable) by which any of thoſe were taken off who were put to Death. But being put into fears by her Council; that without making great Examples of Juſtice in all parts of the Kingdom, ſhe would be in danger of having new Inſurrections made by the *Proteſtants* againſt her; ſhe was perſwaded that the only way to prevent the ſheding of more Blood for the Future, was to puniſh conſiderable numbers of thoſe who had then actually broken the old Laws of her Kingdom. Her Biſhops (and that is the chief and juſteſt ground of the charge) had their Fears and Revenge alſo, in particular: They were newly reſtored to their Biſhopricks, and Religion, of which they had been diſpoſſeſſed in the Time of King *Edward* the Sixth; They were afraid of being again diſturbed; and theſe fears and paſſions made them take wrong meaſures. They perſwaded the Queen, that ſhe might as well make Examples of Juſtice, and prevent future Inſurrections, by puniſhing thoſe for their Religion, who had been Guilty of Treaſon, as if ſhe had puniſhed them for Treaſon: And they urged, that by this way ſhe ſhould do her ſelf the greater right: and give a proof to the World, that ſhe was more offended with Treaſon committed againſt Heaven, (for ſo they eſteemed *Proteſtant* Religion) than with Treaſon committed againſt her ſelf, which might be interpreted Revenge. They had forgotten the Principles of the true *Chriſtian* Religion, which required to leave unto God, to Revenge whatſo-

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ever Injuries are done to him, and to leave it to God to judge, what Injuries were done to him; *They did not now think of doing unto others as they would that others should do unto them:* They did not remember the wise advice of *Gamaliel*, before mention'd, but giving Ear only to their own Fears, and preferring Humane Policies before Gospel-Rules, they misled the Queen, and took away the Lives of vast numbers of such, against whom nothing could be charged, but what was matter of meer Religion; thereby giving a just occasion to charge upon their own Religion the Principle of *Persecution* for meer Religion, which those who now profess that Religion here, do pretend to disown and abominate.

And as to the business of the *Powder-Plot*, they pray us to observe, that it was the Treason, not of the *Papists* of *England*, but of a few, particular persons of Desperate Fortunes and worse Consciences, and not without suspition of being drawn into the Snare by their Enemies: That upon the most severe Scrutiny which could be made into that business, it clearly appear'd, that the number of the Offenders was not greater than what happens sometimes to be engag'd in a particular Burglary, and not so many as make up the fourth part of a Foot Company of Souldiers: That the Villany of that design hath been as fully and generally, yea, and as publickly decry'd, condemn'd and reprobated by the whole party of *English Papists* of that Age, and of all succeeding Ages, as any thing can be by a Party in *Persecution*, who have not ever had any opportunities or allowances to act in any case otherwise then each person of the party only in his private Capacity might do: and they Appeal to the Justice of those who profess to have the greatest Aversion of all others against the Religion of the *Papists*, whether they will admit it as a rule, that the Villanies of some private persons, who profess themselves to be in Fellowship or Communion with any Church or people, calling themselves *Christians*, may in Justice, and ought in Reason to be charged as proceeding from the Principles, Doctrines, or Religion of that Church or people with which private persons profess to be in Communion or Fellowship? They cry out, God forbid any such Rule should have credit in the World.

On the other ſide, I am not ignorant, that the *Papiſts* who Eſteem the *Proteſtants* in general as their mortal Enemies, by whom they apprehend themſelves to have been depriv'd of what is moſt dear unto them, from the time that the *Proteſtant* Religion firſt gain'd a Preheminency in *England*, are as highly Uncharitable towards the *Proteſtants*, as theſe are ſevere in their Cenſures towards them. They have almoſt look'd upon the *Proteſtants*, as the *Iſraelites* did upon the *Egyptians*; They charg'd upon them the guilt of all Blood that hath been ſhed, of all the Perſecutions which have hap'ned for matters of meer Religion, ſince the firſt Act of *Parliament* of that nature, made by King *Henry* the VIII unto this hour: Inſinuating, that what was ſo Cruelly Acted by Q. *Mary*'s Biſhops, was occaſion'd by the Provocations given in the time of King *Edward* the VI. and warranted (as far as ill Acts can be warranted,) Firſt, by the *Non-conformiſts* Retaliations towards the Church of *England*, when ſubdu'd by them upon the Death of King *Charles* the I. and then by the Retaliation made to the *Non-conformiſts* by thoſe of the Church of *England*, ſince the Reſtoration of our preſent Soveraign.

In ſhort, as the *Proteſtants* in general, to excuſe and juſtifie themſelves, labour to caſt *Perſecution* for matters of meer Religion upon the *Papiſts*, as a Principle of *Popery*; ſo the *Papiſts* are as Induſtrious to perſwade the World, that it is a Principle of *Proteſtancy*.

I might here by way of Apology and Extenuation refer the *Papiſts*, as they do the *Proteſtants*, to conſider of Circumſtances of times and things which occaſion'd their Severities againſt them, as the unrulineſs which might probably be amongſt the people in the time of K. *Edw.* the VI. to ſee their Religion alter'd as they conceiv'd, by the *Protector*. And in Q. *Elizabeth*'s time, beſides the reſentment which the *Proteſtants* had of the Cruelties which were exercis'd againſt them in Q. *Mary*'s time, It is certain, the *Papiſts* did not look upon Q. *Elizabeth* to have any Right to the Crown; ſhe having been declar'd by the Judicial Sentence, and Judgement of Arch-Biſhop *Cranmer* to be Illegitimate; and the Marriage between K. *Henry* VIII. and *Anne* of *Bullen* her Mother, being by the ſame Sentence declar'd abſolutely

ſolutely void *ab Initio*, and that Sentence confirm'd by Act of *Parliament*, 28 *Hen.* 8. c. 7. So that the *Papiſts* took Q. *Mary* of *Scotland* to be the Rightful Heir to the Crown, and Rightful Queen, and Q. *Elizabeth* was conſtrain'd by great neceſſity to keep them under; but Apologies are not proper to be made on the behalf of thoſe, who have the Authority towards thoſe who are ſubjected.

And as the *Proteſtants* in general, and the *Papiſts*, reproach'd each other, reciprocally charging upon each other, that *Perſecution* for matters of meer *Religion* was a Principle of each others *Religion*; ſo did the *Epiſcopal Proteſtants*, and the *Non-Conformiſts*: The *Epiſcopal Party*, who firſt *Perſecuted* the *Non-conformiſts* under the general Name of *Puritans*, or *Preſbyterians*, affirm'd, *That their firſt beginners in* Scotland, *from whence they deriv'd themſelves, did more than any Party upon Earth Perſecute others for matters of meer Religion, and had gain'd a Power by their Uſurpation, Oppreſſion and Perſecution; being a ſort of people who wanted the very Eſſentials (as they ſaid) of Religion*, viz. *A Right Ordination, without which (as they alleadged) there could be no True Church, no True Miniſtery, or True Sacraments: And that, therefore they ought by Penal Laws, timely made, to be prevented from making Diſturbances in* England. The *Puritans* to juſtify themſelves, denying *Perſecution* for matters of meer *Religion* to be their Principle, or to be lawful, labour'd to fix it upon the Church of *England* as their Principle, and as taken up by them from the *Papiſts*. And as to the particulars charg'd upon thoſe of *Scotland*, they ſaid, *That whatſoever thoſe of the* Reformation *had done in* Scotland, *was approv'd and abetted by Queen* Elizabeth *and the* Proteſtants *of* England, *without whoſe Advice nothing in* Scotland *had been Tranſacted, and without whoſe Aſſiſtance things had not been ſo Effected*: They further ſaid, as to the point of *Ordination, That the Church of* England *ought not in Reaſon, to account* Epiſcopal Ordination *to be ſuch an Eſſential of Religion as they charged, for that if no* Ordination *could be valid but by* Biſhops, *that then it would follow, that no* Ordination *could be valid but from True and Rightful* Biſhops *of the True Church of Chriſt; and then the* Ordination *of the Church of* England *would be as invalid as*

the *Ordination* of thoſe of *Scotland*; for the Church of *England* could make out no *Succeſſion* of Biſhops, but through the *Popiſh Church*, which both parties (as well thoſe of the Church of *England*, as thoſe of *Scotland*) had condemned and agreed to be a *Falſe Church*, and no *True Church* of Chriſt, but an *Harlot* and *Anti-chriſtian*.

Thus the *Epiſcopal Proteſtants* and the *Puritans* charged and recriminated each other; the *Epiſcopal* Party nevertheleſs making good their ground, ſo long as they had the Civil Power to ſupport them; but when upon the Death of K. *Charles* the I. the *Non-conformiſts* gain'd the *Civil Power* into their Hands, the *Church of* England *Party* (like all Parties oppreſs'd) being under *Perſecution*, together with the *Papiſts*, for matters of meer *Religion*, *Did abſolutely condemn all ſuch Perſecutions as Unlawful*. And then the *Non-conformiſts* (who were at that time ſub-divided, and branch'd out into ſeveral other Parties) gave occaſion to charge them with the Principle of *Perſecution* for meer *Religion*, and put them to uſe the ſame Arguments to clear themſelves, as the *Epiſcopal* Party and *Papiſts* had reſpectively before made uſe of, when the Government was in them, to prevail with the World to believe that they abhorr'd the Principle of *Perſecution* for meer *Religion*; and that the *Perſecutions* us'd by them, were not for any matters of meer *Religion*, nor in Truth *Perſecutions*, but purely Acts of *Prudence*, and doing right to themſelves by a juſt care to keep the *Epiſcopal Party* and the *Papiſts* out of all poſſibility of *Perſecuting* them any more for the future.

But none of them could find any reaſon of that Nature to excuſe the *Perſecutions*, which they us'd towards the people called *Quakers*, they could not charge them with ever having *Perſecuted* any Party or Perſon: Yet in Fact, both the *Non-conformiſts* and the *Epiſcopal Party* did *Perſecute* them in their turns; and therefore to prevent being charged for perſecuting a quiet People for matters of meer *Religion*, They pretended ſometimes, that the *Quakers* were all *Mad-men*, and that they Impriſon'd them only to keep them out of the way, and to preſerve them in peace: And thoſe who had gotten the *Government*, would upon that Title claim the right of judging what perſons were *Mad*, as they

they did always of judging what was *Truth* and what *Error*. At other times they pretended to puniſh the *Quakers* as Blaſphemers, and the Perſecutors being the only Judges of what was Blaſphemy under their Government, they might make what they pleas'd Blaſphemy. When they grew aſham'd of this Charge, they then pretended, that the *Quakers* were conceal'd *Papiſts*, and that every one who ſpoke or utter'd any thing in their Meetings (whether *Man* or *Woman*) was a *Jeſuit* Diſguis'd. It was clear, that the *Quakers* ſuffer'd highly, and it was as clear, there could not with any ſhew of Truth be any thing charg'd againſt them, but what was matter of meer *Religion.*

Now upon the whole Buſineſs, what ſhall ſuch a perſon judge of theſe matters, who eſteems himſelf in danger of being judged by God, if he ſhall make any raſh Judgment? Shall we take for a ſufficient ſolid Proof, the Charge of an Exaſperated Enemy, againſt an Enemy who hath provoked him, and this in a matter of ſo great a Concernment, as to render not a ſingle Perſon, but a whole Party unworthy to live? This were to judge againſt the Rules of common Juſtice and Righteouſneſs, as well as to Sin againſt Charity: And this way of judging would render each Party (the *Quakers* only excepted) to be Guilty, and to give a juſt Title to each Party, where it hath the poſſeſſion of Power and Government to put to Death all of the other Parties.

For though we in *England* ſhould refuſe to admit the Charge of the *Papiſts* here to be a ſufficient proof againſt the *Proteſtants* in ſo great a matter; yet let us not deceive our ſelves ſo far, as to ſuppoſe that in *Popiſh Countries*, the Charge of *Papiſts* againſt *Proteſtants* would not be taken to be at the leaſt as valid, as the Charge of *Proteſtants* will be taken to be againſt *Papiſts* here. Shall we go another way, and ſay, that in regard every Party takes it ſelf to be the only good and true *Chriſtian*, and in regard we ſee every Party, when in Power, practiſing this thing, and perſecuting the other (when in their Power) for matters of meer Religion, that therefore every Party agrees in this? *That it is Lawful for thoſe who are the true* Chriſtians, *to Make and Execute Penal Laws againſt ſuch as are Erroneous* Chriſtians, *and to Inflict Pains and Penalties upon them for matters of meer Religion,*

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that is, for Errors held by them as Doctrines of Religion: But neither will this be reasonable or convenient; for this will also give Title to those who have the *Actual Power*, and are in the possession of each respective Government in the *Christian* World, to put to Death, and destroy all within their respective Jurisdictions, whom they judge to be *Erroneous Christians*: And this will be also to Entitle the Civil Magistrate in every *Christian Country*, to the absolute and uncontroulable right of judging between *Truth* and *Error*, so as to have no appeal from his definitive Judgment; and to entail against common Sense an *Infallibility* in the *Civil Magistrate* of every *Country* of determining in matters of *Faith* and *Religion*: *I say, against common Sense; for* Christianity *teacheth us, that there can be but one true Faith; and if this Power of judging should be allow'd to the Civil Magistrate*, there would be as many *Faiths* as there are *Governments* amongst *Christians*: That would be true Faith in one Country, and the denyal of it punishable with *Death*; which in another Country would be an *Error* and a *False Faith*, and the affirming of it punishable with *Death*.

It would also be to justify not only what the *Papists* in *England*, but what both the *Papists* and *Protestants* in all other parts cast as a Charge upon our *Nation, That the only Rule of Faith in* England, *is the Parliament of* England; *that nothing is true* Christian Doctrine *in* England, *nor any Translation or Sense, or Interpretation of Scripture, a true Translation or Sense, or Interpretation of Scripture in* England, *but what is judg'd so to be by the Parliament of* England. Whereas, though in the *Statute* made 2, 3 *Edw.* 6. c. 1 Entituled, *An Act for the Uniformity of Service and Administration of the Sacraments throughout the Realm*: It was affirm'd by that Parliament, *That the Book of Common-Prayer enjoyn'd by that Statute to be us'd, was made by the Aid of the Holy Ghost*: Yet that very *Book* was by that very *Parliament* alter'd and amended, as appears by Statute 5 *Edw.* 6. C. 1. And it hath received several *Reformations* and *Amendments* since, and was in and by a *Parliament* in Q. *Marys* days, judged to be *Heretical*.

As to my own Judgment in this particular Affair, it leads me to another way of reasoning and discoursing; I do, and I think I am

am bound in Charity to believe that every Perſon and Party who profeſſeth *Chriſtianity*, do at leaſt intend to be what they profeſs, and that they do all in their Hearts fully give conſent unto all thoſe common Doctrines of *Chriſtianity*, which, as ſtanding Principles of that pure *Religion*, were never queſtion'd or deny'd by any ſort of *Chriſtians*, ſuch as are thoſe which I have before obſerv'd, *Of doing unto others, as we would have others do unto us, and of not doing Evil, that Good may come of it*; and thoſe others of *Loving our Neighbours as our ſelves*; *yea, and of Loving our very Enemies, and doing good to them that who hate us and uſe us deſpightfully*: All which, when ſoberly conſider'd, without Paſſion or Humane Intereſt, are expreſly againſt all *Perſecutions* for matters of meer Religion, and do not only tye up *Proteſtants* from deſtroying of *Proteſtants*, but even from Perſecuting of any ſort for any matters of meer *Religion*: as thoſe Commands, *Thou ſhalt do no Murther, Thou ſhalt not Steal, Thou ſhalt not commit Adultery*, are againſt and tye up all *Chriſtians* from ſhedding of Blood Unlawfully and Malitiouſly, and againſt *Rapine* and *Uncleanneſs*. And ſuch do alſo in their Hearts believe, that whatever Counſel or work is of man, will fall of it ſelf; and that what is of God will ſtand Maugre all the *Perſecutions* and Oppoſitions of man; and that there is none of them do intend to fight againſt God, or would willingly be found ſo doing. All this being taken by me in my own Thoughts, to be moſt certainly true, when ever I come to enquire, How then can theſe things be? How can all theſe Parties (among which there are great numbers of Good, Sober, Judicious and Sincere perſons) offend againſt theſe common Principles of the common *Faith* of all *Chriſtians*, by making and Executing *Penal Laws* for matters of meer *Religion*? *Immediately adjoyning* to this another Queſtion, which is, And how can ſo many perſons, profeſſing to be *Chriſtians*, take revenge by Blood, uſurp the Goods of their Neighours, and commit the Sin of *Uncleanneſs*! Yet all theſe were once done by that great and good King, and Prophet, who was *a Man after God's own Heart*. That which to me Anſwers this latter Queſtion, ſeems clearly to ſolve the former; That the *Beaſt* gets the better of the *Man*; The *Paſſions* commit a force upon *Reaſon*, And Humane Frailty, being too weak, brings the beſt of men

ſometimes (though but for a time) and careleſs men oftentimes to contradict their *Faith* by their *Practice*, until by Afflictions they gain underſtanding, and come to *Repentance* for the Saving of their Souls. This to me ſeems ſo evident a Truth, that, until ſomething more evident ſhall convince me of my being miſtaken in this, I ſhould think it as great a Sin againſt *Charity*, for me to charge it as a Principle of the Religion of any Party (profeſſing to be *Chriſtians*) *That Perſecution for meer Religion is Lawful*, becauſe I ſee it practis'd by thoſe who have Power amongſt that Party, as to charge the ſame Party, to hold it as a Principle of their Religion, that Murther, Theft and Adultery are Lawful, becauſe great numbers of that Party, are too often guilty of the practice of thoſe Sins.

If this way of conſidering things be not found unreaſonable, but upon due reflection, ſhall appear to be conformable to the true Principles of *Chriſtianity*, and the *Holy Rules* and *Doctrines* of Chriſt, I hope thoſe who are publick perſons, will forgive me when I wiſh they would lay it to their Hearts, and think well, whether it would not be of uſe to preſerve this poor *Nation*, from the further guilt of thoſe additional *Injuſtices*, and *Cruelties*, which the contrary way of raſh Judging muſt involve, and daily do involve us in.

Is it not more calm Judgment to ſay, That the *Diſordinate Paſſions* of K. *Henry* the VIII. hurried him into thoſe *Cruelties* which he committed, than to impute them to the *Principles* of any *Religion* which he profeſs'd? Is it not more becoming us to ſay, that an over-zealous Paſſion of *Fears* which our firſt *Reformers* had in the time of K. *Edw.* the ſixth, made them apprehend, that they could not put *Popery* out of its Poſſeſſion otherwiſe than by force, and conſequently led them unwarily into practices, which were contrary to their *True Faith*, then to admit the Charge laid on them by the then Perſecuted *Papiſts*, *That Perſecution for meer Religion, was the firſt* Proteſtant Principle, *upon which* Proteſtancy *laid its firſt Politick Foundation in* England? Were it not more Ingenious, to attribute the *Cruelties*, which were inflicted in Q. *Mary*'s time, to the *Paſſion* of *Fear* in that Queen, and of *Fear* and *Covetouſneſs* in her *Biſhops*, that nothing could ſecure her againſt *New Rebellions* from the *Proteſtants*, nor

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fix the Bishops in their re-gain'd Possessions, but Examples of the utmost rigour, then to labour to fix those Barbarous Cruelties as a Principle upon the Religion of the Queen? Is it not more Charitable to assign all the harsh Laws made and executed in the times of Queen *Elizabeth*, King *James*, and in the several succeeding times since by the Government avowedly *Protestant*, to the Fear, Ambition, Revenge, or other frail Passions, cover'd generally under the specious Titles of *Reason of State*, then to give the World a just Ground to charge those Cruelties upon a Principle of *Protestancy*. This we must do, or (which is as much to our Dishonour) we must give a just Ground to the most Civiliz'd Nations of the World, to charge those past Barbarities, exercis'd so long in *England*, upon the People of our Nation, to the Cruelties of our *English Natures*: For what other thing can *Forreign Nations* impute it unto, when they shall observe the same Persecution continued for near one hundred and forty years, under all the various *Forms of Religion* which we have had, each Party renouncing the Cruelties to proceed from any Principle of the Religion own'd by that Party, yet exercising in *Fact*, what they renounce to be their *Faith*.

But my Charity doth not rest here, it compels me to make yet one step further; and since it is not to the Dishonour of our Nation, I hope none will be displeas'd with it. As I am verily perswaded, that all those *Penal Laws*, which have been made in this our Nation for the inflicting of Pains and Penalties for matters of meer Religion, have not had their Original from any Principle of any of those Religions which have been profess'd by any of those Powers or Governments by which they were made, but ought to be imputed to the Passions of those who made, and caus'd them to be put in Execution: And that a false Reason of *State*, or zeal in *Church-men*, gave those Passions leave to work even against the Religion which every Party Persecuting, Profess'd; so do I most confidently believe, that the True Principles of the common *Christianity*, which every Party own'd, and true Reason of *State* grounded upon those true and commonly own'd Principles, restrain'd all and every the respective Parties, by whom those Laws were made, from all Intentions of having all, or any of those Laws rigidly Executed; so that

those who had from time to time, and who still have the Executive and Interpretative Power of those Laws vested in them, have always understood, and do still continue to understand those Laws not to have been intended by the Legislative Power to be *strictly* and *rigidly* or *constantly executed*: My Reason is, that had this been otherwise, All of All Parties, except one, who at some time had been in Power, must have been e're this totally Butcher'd or destroy'd, and our poor Country so far Depopulated as to have become a Prey to some of our Potent Neighbours: For even in Queen *Mary's* times, thousands escaped that never fled; and had private Meetings, but the most Eminent were Cruelly used.

I know some there are who have imputed the remiss Execution of these unkind Laws to the Generous Good Nature which is found in the generality of our Nation, which abhors Cruelty, and hath always a compassion for those who are under Persecution; and which well appears to any who reflect upon the tenderness of our Courts of Justice, and of the generality both of our Magistrates, and our Juries in all the Countries in *England*, and how they have comported themselves under the several Circumstances of past Times, when they have been call'd upon, and Provok'd, yea Threatn'd, and endeavour'd to have been forc'd into a Spirit of Persecuting.

Others there are, who have taken the great unwillingness in all sorts of persons to be active in the Execution of these Laws to proceed from the innate zeal that is in every *English* man to preserve the Liberties and Properties of their Fellow Subjects, as well as their own; and that they have observ'd, that Liberty and Property were never any way so much Entrench'd upon, violated and destroyed, as by these Cruel Laws of Persecution for meer Religion: So that every man considering when he sees his Neighbour (though differing in Judgement from himself) Persecuted and destroyed for what ought to be call'd rather his mistake then his Fault (for no man can believe against his Judgement, or take an Oath against his Conscience without sin) that though this be his Neighbours turn this year, it may be his own turn the next year, or next Reign; and no mans Life, Liberty or Property can be secure in case such Laws be Executed;

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but only ſuch men, who have a Conſcience fitted for all Changes of Government, and for every Religion that is uppermoſt, and who for that reaſon are as unfit to be Truſted by their Neighbours as by the Government.

But though I take it to be very true that this natural inclination to Mercy and pity, and this real zeal which all men have for the preſerving of Liberty and Property, may have been great helps to keep off, or mitigate the ſevere Execution of theſe Laws of Perſecution for meer Religion; yet when I well conſider the great power and Influences which the Supreme Authority always hath upon the Subjects; and particularly upon all the Magiſtrates in general, who are always perſons nominated and appointed by the Supreme Authority; and muſt be therefore ſuppos'd to be ſuch in whom the Supreme Authority always Confides, as to the due Execution of what the Supreme Authority intends to have Executed; I think it will Naturally follow, that a forbearance of the rigid Execution of theſe Laws, ought to be chiefly imputed to the Religion and true *Chriſtian* policy of the Supreme Authority; and we ought to believe, that though a falſe Reaſon of State did ſometimes permit Humane Frailty, to make ſuch Laws as were contradictory to the true Laws and Principles of that very Religion which thoſe perſons profeſſed, by whom thoſe Laws were made; yet true Religion, and true reaſon of ſtate always kept thoſe perſons from intending to have thoſe Laws rigidly and ſeverely Executed.

I will confirm this by one ſingle Inſtance of the higheſt Nature, and that not in the beſt of times.

The laſt *Popiſh Prieſt* that was put to Death in *England* for being a *Prieſt* of the *Romiſh Church*, was put to Death in the time of *Cromwel*; I ſuppoſe, we are not to doubt of the Paſſionate heat which inflam'd thoſe who were then in Authority againſt the *Papiſts* and *Popery*; they look'd on the *Papiſts* as mortal Enemies to their Government, and as faſt Friends, and devoted Servants to the Crown and Royal Family: Notwithſtanding which, when the ſaid *Prieſt* came upon his Tryal at the *Seſſions-houſe* in the *Old-Baily* in *London*, and upon his Arraignment, Pleaded that he was not Guilty of *Treaſon*, but acknowledg'd himſelf to be a *Prieſt* of the *Roman Church*: It clearly ap-

pear'd, that those who were his Judges, did their utmost to preserve his Life, and to prevent the Execution against him of those Laws upon which he stood Indicted: For they did for many hours suspend the Recording of his Confession, making it their endeavour to prevail with him to Plead *not Guilty* to the Indictment: They pressed him to this in the publick Court, assuring him, that if he would so Plead, his Life should be safe; and that they had no Evidence which could prove him to be a *Priest*. And when the Old Man (Aged about seventy two years) would not be drawn to deny himself to be a *Priest*; (taking it to be a denying of his Religion) and that the Court was compell'd to give Judgment against him; the Magistrate who gave the Sentence, was so drown'd in Tears upon that sad occasion, that it was long before he could pronounce the Sentence, which the Law compell'd (as he profess'd) to give. Now I ask, can it be presum'd that in those severe times against *Popery*, those who then sate upon the Seat of Justice, would, or durst have proceeded thus in a publick Court, and made it their business so openly, so avowedly to have sav'd the Life of a *Priest* of that Party, if they had not well consider'd that the Makers of those Laws, and even *Cromwel*, who had then taken upon him the Government of these Nations, did not in Truth intend a rigid and severe Execution of those Laws, which were for Inflicting Pains and Penalties for matter of meer Religion?

But I think, I need give no further Instances for the proof of this my Opinion: Whosoever shall reflect upon the present *Genius* of our whole Nation, and consider in what detestation all men have the Execution of Persecuting Laws for matters of meer Religion, how publickly Informers are Abhorr'd and Discountenanced, when they labour to Persecute any upon any such Law, will easily see that the whole Nation in general is Convinc'd, that those Laws were never any of them made, with intention to have them rigidly Executed. I have been told, (and it seems to be grounded upon Reason) that it is a Principle of our Laws, *That even an Act of Parliament, which is against the Law of God, or against Reason, is void in it self*; If this be true (as methinks it ought to be) I think we are very near the time, wherein all our present Laws of this Nature, by which

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any are ſubject to be in any meaſure Perſecuted for matters of meer Religion, will be Repealed by the general Voice of the whole Nation, and that when the particular Perſons, of which the great Body of this Nation is compos'd, ſhall have conſidered ſomething more deliberately, than their Paſſions have yet permitted all to do, that every Law of this Nature is againſt the Liberty and Property of the Subjects of *England*; Unjuſt and Cruel, in puniſhing men for not proceeding againſt their Conſciences; Expreſly againſt the very Principles and Rules of the Goſpel of Chriſt, and Principles of that true Religion which every one of us pretends to own; Deſtructive to the Trade and Well-being of our Nation, by Oppreſſing and driving away the moſt Induſtrious Working Hands of our Nation, and Depopulating, and thereby Impoveriſhing our Country, which is capable of imploying three times the number of People which we now have: Contradictory to the Rule of Juſtice, grounded upon common Reaſon, as well as Religion, which requires, *That no man ſhould do unto another, what he would not have done unto himſelf*, And conſequently void in it ſelf by the Rule of the Laws of our Country: There will not be found a Magiſtrate, nay, a common Subject in *England*, who will not as politively renounce the putting in execution, or being acceſſary to the executing of any Law of this Nature, as he will renounce the becoming guilty of thoſe deteſtable Sins of Murder or Theft.

But until Men are a little further convinc'd of theſe Truths, you (Sir) ought not to be angry with, but rather pity thoſe Magiſtrates from whoſe Hands you have lately ſuffer'd for a Matter meerly of Religion: Peradventure they did not fully conſider that the Matter with which you were charged, was a thing of meer Religion, but took your Meeting in an Aſſembly meerly for the Worſhip of God, *to be an unlawful Aſſembly*, becauſe prohibited by a preſent Law, as the poor Magiſtrates in the Apoſtles times took their Meetings in their Aſſemblies meerly for the Worſhip of God, to be unlawful Aſſemblies and Breaches of the Peace, becauſe they were prohibited by their Laws: Or perhaps their fear that they ſhould themſelves be ſubject to a Forfeiture, in caſe they ſhould have deny'd their Warrant to the Informer, made them fail under that Humane Frailty for ſecuring

curing of themſelves. However it was, I ſuppoſe you have no juſt Ground to believe the thing to be any effect of Malice againſt you or your Friends; and if it be not, then the ſame Magiſtrates, now their fear is over, may yet be inſtrumental to do you and themſelves Right. It is Odds but upon a ſtrict Reflection upon what the Informer hath ſworn, the Devil may have prevailed with him to ſwear ſomething which may be proved untrue; for Informers are not ſqueamiſh in ſwearing for their own profit, as it hath appear'd in *London* and *Middleſex*, and one point of Perjury proved, will invalidate all his Teſtimony, and reverſe all that is done: At which I am very confident no Man (beſides the Informer) will be diſpleaſed. And this is in plain Truth the great Reaſon why your Friends here deſire to know all the Circumſtances of your Caſe; the certifying of which, may be an Advantage to your ſelf and your Friends there, and will be particularly very welcome unto

Sir,

Your Old True Friend

And Humble Servant,

A. N.

Poſtſcript.

Postscript.

I Have here omitted many of those great Arguments, both which others have used, and which may yet be advanced from the Nature of this Subject, partly because there are so many Discourses extant, and partly because English mankind begins to be satisfied in the Matter. Yet this give me leave to add in general, That Force upon Conscience, and Corporal Penalties about Matters of Religion, have not only no President or Example from Christ or his Apostles, but are expresly against both their Precepts and Examples.

This Coercion is the old Disturber of States, the Destroyer of Property, the Depopulator of Kingdoms, the Enemy of Humane Nature, of Kind Neighbourhood, and of Conscientious Religion. At best it either maketh men Religious by Rote, which is no Religion, or Conformable for Fear and Intereſt, which is Ir-religion and base Hypocrisy. But besides all this, it corrupteth and distracteth the Nature of all Civil Government, by making the measure of Loyalty, not Love, Honour and Obedience to Cæsar, but Conformity to the Clergy and Religion in Fashion; which destroys the true Dependence and Obligation in Government, and subjects the Lives, Liberties and Estates of the People to the frequent Revolutions of Religion; which ought to stand fixed and Sacred upon the common and undeniable Principles of Civil and Just Government.

I hope I shall be excus'd for this Conception, since of all others, This renders to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's: And I would to God, all the Cæsars of the World saw the Truth of this Notion: They would not then suffer themselves to be grown upon, not only by another Power then Cæsar's, but by a Power contrary to Cæsar's, and which in the tendency of it leaves Cæsar nothing but His Name. Let Him be felt King of all His People, by His Goodness, as well as by His Power. Optimus went before Maximus among Infidels; and shall Pretenders to the best of Religions (Christianity I mean) decline it? All Creatures Nourish and Defend their Young: We are the Children of the Government, and should be Comforted and De-

Defended under the Magistrates *Wing of Just Power and Favour: He should Endeavour our Encrease, Encourage our Industry, and thereby Enrich and Replenish the Kingdom, not Impoverish and Depopulate it. For* the Glory of a Prince is in the multitude of his People: *Not* Beggars, *but* Men of Industry. *But who dares to be Industrious, that would not have his Labours made the* Forfeit *of his* Sober Conscience? *UNHAPPY AGE!* Come! *'tis time for Humane Nature to remember from whence she came, for Mankind to* Love, *for* Cæsar to be kind to all His People; *To let his Rain fall upon all, his Sun-shine upon all, that he may justly render Himself Master of the* Affections *of all; and not serve* Factions *nor* Interest, *nor imbroile his Government with the Opinionary Differences about Religion, which doth not Enlarge, but* Narrow *His Empire: And those that put him upon such Measures, let their Pretences be what it will, they are too narrow for his Glory, and do* Ill Offices *in the great Family of the Kingdom. They set the* Father against the Son, *and excite him to Dis-inherit his Children, and those* Virtuous too, *meerly for the sober Exercise of a Dissenting Conscience, about matters relating to t'other World: This is* Practising Reprobation for Opinion, and sacrificing Nature and Morality to Modes of Religion: *Nay, this is to* Engross *Cæsar* by a Party, and to Monopolize Him from the rest of His People; *A sin against the very Nature and end of Government. God grant us all more Wisdom, more Honesty, and more Charity, and that we may yet live to see* all Industry encouraged, the Poor employed, the Kingdom in Love with its own Growths, Virtue only rewarded, Vice only punished, that *Righteousness, Peace* and *Plenty* may yet vouchsafe to dwell amongst us. So be it to *Cæsar* and His people, while the Sun and Moon endures.

THE END.

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